

## Celebrity Platforms

By Timothy James Young

When I say “celebrity platforms”, I’m not talking about their shoes. I’m talking about the apparatus in which they use to bring about social change. When it comes to celebrity platforms of the 21st Century, I elect Colin Kaepernick and Kim Kardashian as King and Queen.

Everyone knows that Colin Kaepernick risked his NFL career by taking a knee to draw attention to the systemic racism, oppression, and police brutality that Black people in America are subjected to. People know about the kneeling, and they know about his many accomplishments on the field. What they don’t know about, however, is his many accomplishments off the field.

During his time away from football, Colin Kaepernick has been the recipient of the Muhammad Ali Legacy Award, Ambassador of Conscience Award, the Eason Monroe Courageous Advocate Award, and even made GQ Citizen of the Year. He is recognized for his humanitarianism because he donates much of his time, money, and resources towards helping various non-profit organizations and community groups.

He also heads the Know Your Rights Camp, which is a free campaign for youth that helps raise awareness of higher education and self empowerment, and also teaches about safely interacting with law enforcement. All in all, Colin Kaepernick is using his platform to effect change, and he is doing it in a way that differentiates him from most other athletes.

As a newcomer to the world of activism, Kim Kardashian was met with a lot of side eyes and skepticism. People in activist communities questioned her motives. They questioned her commitment. But while they were sitting around conjecturing, she was busy bringing pop culture to the doorstep of criminal justice reform.

There will always be a contingency of naysayers, but based on Kim’s track record, skeptics are going to have to come to terms with the fact that Kim Kardashian has proven to be the real deal!

Not to toot Kim’s horn, but how many other “A” list celebrities do you know of that are down in the trenches, fighting to rectify the wrongs of the criminal justice system?!?

Not only is she fighting to correct the wrongs of the criminal justice system, but she has taken that fight straight to the white house! She has met with President Trump, she has met with his administration, and she has acted as a liaison while working with various social justice organizations to get a prison reform bill on the books. Needless to say, she was instrumental in getting the First Step Act passed, and signed into law.

Kim is not just “talking” about criminal justice reform, she is being about it. This was evidenced by the fact that she was willing to journey into the belly of the beast (Death Row,) and visit with wrongfully convicted prisoners like Kevin Cooper and Rodney Reed.

Kim has not only visited and advocated on behalf of various prisoners, but she has also used her time, money and resources to help secure their freedom. The last time I checked, there was a growing list of about 20 prisoners that she has helped set free, including Alice Johnson, the grandmother who was serving life in prison for a non violent drug offense.

Say what you will about Colin, say what you will about Kim, but from where I sit, they are doing the kind of work that makes other celebrities look counterfeit.

True, there are many celebrities, with many different platforms, but how many of them choose to use them in a revolutionary way? Colin Kaepernick and Kim Kardashian have gone against the grain. They have dared to use theirs in a revolutionary way. For that, I crown them as King and Queen of celebrity platforms.